

# "Bug of the Month"

A common sight around homes in the fall and winter in the Puget Sound area is the adult multicolored Asian lady beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*). This beetle is a native to Asia (particularly Japan and Korea) and was introduced in the United States as a biological control agent for aphids, scales and other soft-bodied insects and by accidental release from cargo ships. Releases in Washington were in Chelan, Klickitat and Yakima Counties. The insects did not establish in eastern Washington, choosing western Washington instead.

**WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?** The multicolored Asian lady beetle adult is about 9/32 inch (7mm) long and oval or convex in shape. It is yellow to red in color and may or may not have black spots on the wing covers. The spots vary in size and pattern, numbering from none to as many as nineteen. The head is usually concealed beneath the disk-shaped pronotum, which is cream to yellow in color and has a black "M" design in the center. The larva (pictured below) is elongated, flattened, and covered with minute tubercles or spines.



**WHAT DO THEY DO?** In the grand scheme of things, the lady beetle is usually considered a beneficial insect. The larvae and adults eat large quantities of aphids and scales that, left unchecked, can cause great harm to trees, shrubs and agricultural crops. Most lady beetle adults spend the winter clustered together in protected areas. Houses present an ideal location for overwintering and adults are attracted to vertical surfaces where they gather in large numbers. Most often, they can be found on south or southwest exposures. The ¼ inch long insects enter wall voids through cracks and settle down for the winter. In the spring, they become active and are drawn into the warm interior of the house. While the Asian lady beetle does not represent a hazard to structural wood or stored food products, and they do not attack humans or pets, they will exude a yellow-orange fluid when disturbed. This is a defense mechanism and has a foul odor. The fluid can also permanently stain walls, drapes, carpeting, etc.



**MANAGEMENT.** Mechanical exclusion is the best method for controlling the Asian lady beetle.

- Cracks around windows, doors, siding, utility pipes, beneath chimneys, and underneath the wood fascia and other openings should be sealed with good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk.
- Damaged screens on doors and windows should be repaired or replaced.
- Attics, fireplace chimneys, and exhaust vents should be covered with number 20 (or smaller) screen mesh.
- Remove beetles already in the house by using a broom and dustpan or a vacuum cleaner. Avoid killing the beetles if possible and release them outdoors so that they can continue to provide beneficial control of aphids and scale insects. Inserting a old nylon sock into the vacuum extension hose or wand and secured in place with a rubber band can provide convenient collecting bag for gathering adults and then releasing them outdoors.

Pesticides can be used for severe lady beetle infestations. Wettable powders and microencapsulated formulations of residual pyrethroid pesticides appear to be the most effective against the multicolored Asian lady beetle. **Be sure to read and follow all directions on the label exactly...**

**MORE QUESTIONS?** Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at [MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil](mailto:MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil).